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A Tigress' Record

Soondargowry of the
Amhabbana Jungles
in India.

How She Became a Man Eater
and the Victims She
Has Killed and
Devoured.

Soondargowry lies, outlived, condemned to death, with a thousand natives and over a hundred Englishmen and other foreigners sworn to take her life, secure in the Amhabbana jungles, hard by where the railroad from Calcutta to Bombay crosses the Ib river, for Soondargowry—"the tawny one who deals death"—has in less than one year



WITH ONE BLOW OF HER PAW SHE RIPPED OPEN THE FACE AND BREAST OF A MAN.

killed forty-seven Indian natives and an Englishman. Therefore she must die, and the government of the central provinces has offered a double reward, and the British officials at Sambalpur have organized a great hunt through all the dark and wild jungles of Amhabbana.

Until February, 1904, Soondargowry was a peaceable tigress, leaving her toll of cattle from the jungle dwellers along the Ib river, two, perhaps three, sometimes four cows a week or perhaps a pair of bullocks left in the field. Her mate fell in November, 1903, killed by the bullet from an express rifle, and his glorious skin, measuring ten feet three inches from tip to tip, went to England as a trophy. Two months after the big tiger was slain by the white man hidden in the treetop above the carcass two cubs were born to Soondargowry, a male and a female, and she was happy again.

In February came black men who dug a great hole in the ground in a path through the jungle whither Soondargowry went on her way into the valley to kill cows, and they covered the great hole with bamboo poles and threw over them a screen of leaves and light dirt and went away, and in the bottom of this hole they put a little pig, tied so that he squealed and squealed, for the circus men had come and wanted some tigers, and this was a trap.

When Soondargowry went into the valley to hunt that day she sniffed at the hole and drew back and passed on, being wise and old, but later there came her baby, frenzied by the shrieks of the pig and anxious to show that he, too, could kill. And, as all tigers do, he crept forward, leaped toward the pig and plunged down into the deep pit, lying stunned and scared. Men came—black men—and, looking down, saw the little tigerlet whimpering and running around at the bottom of the pit. A moment later with a crash Soondargowry alighted among them, raging and seeking her cub. With one blow of her paw she ripped open the face and breast of a man and, with her tail thrashing, stood over him, while the others fled in terror. For an hour she roared and whimpered, talking to her cub, and then hearing the men returning with guns she roared a farewell to her son, and, picking up the carcass of the native in her teeth, she leaped into the jungle, dragging it deep into the tangle to eat it. From that day on Soondargowry became a man eater and the terror of a district thirty miles long and ten miles broad, and in that district in less than a year the government reports show that she has taken a toll of forty-eight lives out of revenge for the loss of her cub, which is now with a circus in America.

The natives know that once a tiger has tasted human blood it becomes an inveterate man eater, and the people of the village of Murkar Char and the men of the jungles around about trembled, for they knew that the man eat-

ing tigress is more terrible than the male. At the rustle of a leaf as they worked they trembled and fell flat or fled in panic, and when a squirrel moved in the bushes or an ox switched his tail they trembled and screamed in fright.

Many hunts were organized, but most of them she eluded. The carcasses of fat cattle and choice sheep were filled with poison and left for her, but she refused them. Englishmen and Englishwomen sat night after night on platforms in trees waiting for a shot at her. But her roll of victims grew until in November she encountered a great hunter. This man, Roger O'Hara, swore to kill her or die in the effort. At great expense he bought the body of a native, stood it upright against a little tree deep in the jungle and climbed a tree to wait for her appearance.

Just after sunset the famous man eater leaped into the clearing, tearing the body almost in two at the first stroke of her great paw, and at the same instant the Englishman fired. The bullet struck her, she rolled over and then, with a wild roar of rage, leaped against the tree in which O'Hara sat, striving to catch him. The shock of the impact almost threw him from the tree, but he clung to it for life. Before he could recover and shoot again the tigress bounded away into the depths of the jungle to nurse her wound. She was not heard of for two weeks. Then she killed a head shikari during a hunt, falling upon him and dragging him away in the sight of twenty men and devouring half his body in a short time. That same night she killed a little boy three miles away.

In January Soondargowry made a mistake. She killed an Englishman. The victim was Arthur Donathan, a young English sportsman, who determined to use human bait for the man eater. Donathan at first attempted to purchase from a man dying of consumption his body or his services. The man refused, preferring to die in his bed, and Donathan was forced to purchase the body of a pauper who had died. This he arranged in a spot to which the tigress had dragged one of her victims, placing it in a seated position in a small clearing. He then erected a light, frail platform in a thick clump of bushes, being determined to get a perfect shot as near on the level as possible. At 2 o'clock in the morning, with a bright moon, Donathan was crouching on the platform when a native in a treetop screamed wildly. Donathan, angered, turned. The tigress was behind him, almost under him, creeping forward, her tail lashing the ground, her eyes on him and not on the bait. Donathan had no time to use his gun. As he turned Soondargowry sprang, and the Englishman, desperate, grasped at her with bare hands. Together they crashed through the frail platform to the ground. The natives, dropping from



AS HE TURNED, SOONDARGOWRY SPRANG. the trees, ran in, and the tigress, dropping Donathan's body, fled to her lair.

The death of Donathan aroused the English, even at Calcutta, and plans for the execution of the most famous man eater of modern India were completed. The hunt was ordered to continue until she is slain. Soondargowry's forty-eight victims swelled the total of India's losses of life for the year. During 1904, according to the British government reports, 2,749 human beings were killed by wild animals in India, 1,941 of them by tigers.

Rats and Plague.

Skinner states that examinations of the habits of the rat, so far as they are known, do not bear out the theory that he is the source of the disease. He does suffer from plague, and were he the source the epidemic should be most acute when the rat is in most intimate contact with the human population. There is nothing to show that destruction of rats decreases plague incidence. Rats avoid lime, as it burns their feet, so that the free use of unslaked lime will keep them away. It is when rats and men are out in the fields that they are liable to attack by some agent common to both as causing plague, and this cause decreases to a minimum when rats and men are most closely associated during the rains.—British Medical Journal.

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